



Lifelines

The Newsletter of the RI AFG, November 2007

The Gifts of Sponsorship

Contributed by members of the Rhode Island Al-Anon Family Groups

Sponsorship is a vital part of the Al-Anon/Alateen program. I was in the program 3 years before I decided on whom to ask to be my sponsor and then got the courage to ask her. When I'm faced with a difficult situation, struggling with uncomfortable feelings, or not sure where I am, I can call or e-mail her for a sympathetic ear or for help sorting through my choices. My recovery has skyrocketed. There's no other way to describe it. Sponsorship works.

In the last issue, I asked you to share a few thoughts on how sponsorship has helped you, either as a sponsor or as a sponsee. How has sponsorship enhanced your practice of the program? What have you learned through sponsorship?

Here's what you had to say...

~ Deb E.

...

I came into the halls of Al-Anon some 7 years ago very numb from the tangled relationships cultivated in the disease of alcoholism. Many qualified me to belong to the fellowship—parents, relatives, friends, former spouse, boyfriend, boss.

After one year in program, I asked a woman in my home group if she would be my sponsor even though I didn't think she would be a good 'match.' With my desperate need for peace, I was willing to do whatever it would take to find this elusive serenity I had heard so much about. Now I see this loving friendship as an extension of the Al-Anon meeting where I can delve into areas that are intimate, delicate, or need more time to share. The gift of freedom I have been given while working through the Steps with my sponsor is miraculous and precious.

I thought the day would never come, but after two years in recovery some women asked me to be their sponsor!

~ Anonymous

...

Sponsorship helped me grow. My disease is a disease of solitude and aloneness, self-doubt, and fear. When I sponsor someone, and am sponsored, I directly deal with those issues and always make progress in overcoming them, little by little, in each phone call, conversation, or discussion.

~ Wendy H.

To learn more about sponsorship, check out: Sponsorship, What It's All About (P-31), Service Sponsorship—Working Smarter, Not Harder (P-88), Alateen Sponsorship, Is It for You? (S-27), and the new bookmark entitled Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover (M-78).

All of this literature is available at the Area Office (see last page).

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A New Literature Project

Service Has Taught Me...

I went to my first workshop early in my program; it was such a wonderful experience I knew someday I would like to get involved. What interested me and remains of interest are the fun and fellowship of people working together for recovery.

This year, I am co-chair...I am doing a lot less because I am learning to trust and mind my own business.

The program has helped me trust in my fellow members. Being in recovery, I have some issues with trust and control. I wanted to do it all my way, which of course in my pea brain was the RIGHT way. In co-chairing the workshop, I have had to step back and let others have the opportunity to do things their way, in their time. It's still difficult for me. At one committee meeting, I was scared because I felt as though we weren't accomplishing the things I believe the workshop needed. You can see the error of my ways by that last sentence. I did not trust my fellow members or, for that matter, my Higher Power. I am learning that if it's not done my way, that is acceptable and how it is supposed to be. I am only a small cog in the machinery. I am needed but so is everyone. The wonderful part is I don't HAVE to do it ALL.

I feel the gift of any type of service is the giving back and growing. Service in general has taught me I am an equal yet vital part of this fellowship. An example is my service in the Area...I have learned to respect others and their willingness to serve. Being involved in the workshop allows me to see myself as others see me, and if I don't like what I see, the choice is mine to change willing!

~ Marie G.

Hi everyone!

As you may know, the Al-Anon World Service Office (WSO) has been posting a sample of Conference Approved Literature (CAL) on the main Al-Anon Web site for a while now. The sample chapter rotates each quarter (right now it's a chapter from *In All Our Affairs*) and it's free for anyone with an internet connection.

Here's the link, if you want to check it out: <http://al-anon.org/chapter.html>

WSO is testing a new project to encourage groups to use CAL in meetings. WSO is asking members to pull out *From Survival to Recovery* and pick a meeting topic. Then, find a few quotes from that book on the topic, and come up with a few questions for group discussion. Selected topics, quotes, and questions will appear on the main Al-Anon website—along with the CAL sample chapter—from April to June 2008.

Submissions are due by December 1, 2007. You can e-mail, fax, or mail them to WSO at:

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23454
Fax: 757-563-1655
E-mail: wso@al-anon.org

Love in the Program,
Leah D., Literature Coordinator, Area 49, Rhode Island

Alateen Spoken Here

Expectations

Rissa, Oregon

Sometimes, I expect a lot of my best friend. I wait for her to call and she never does. Even though it's happened before, I still think she will call. I've been told not to expect anything of her but it's hard to convince myself that she won't call. At school I need to fulfill others' expectations to fit in. I feel I should be like everyone else, wearing name brands or having my hair a certain way. Now I know I can be myself and people will like me.

Sometimes I expect my dad not to be grouchy and to pay attention to me. I think if he's sober that everything will be better, but really it gets harder when the alcoholic is sober. He'll say he is going to try not to be grumpy and I believe him. But then he will get mad about something and that's scary. I keep thinking maybe since he's sober, he'll pay more attention to what I'm showing him. But, my expectations are too high. So I guess I'll have to lower them. Just accept that he is who he is—I can't change him. He will work on himself when he wants to. I know he is trying because he can see that he is being grouchy. But he'll change when he's ready to.

Used with permission from Alateen Talk, Vol. 45, No. 2.

Please Read at All Alateen Meetings

Attention Alateens: This page is for you! Alateen is a vital part of RI Al-Anon Family Groups and, as such, should be represented in its newsletter.

If you are an Alateen who likes to write or express yourself artistically, please consider submitting something for the next issue, either on your own or as a group. Here are just a few ideas, but feel free to come up with your own creative contribution:

- ▲ Write a couple of paragraphs on an Alateen topic or on your experience in the program in general
- ▲ Create a piece of artwork (program-related, of course)
- ▲ Create a word search using words that relate to a particular topic

Please e-mail your submissions to Deb E. at destre99@yahoo.com, or drop off or mail them to the Al-Anon office (see last page).

Please provide your first name and/or the town or group to which you belong, unless you wish to remain anonymous.

Is Your Group Getting Mail?

The Area is concerned that our members aren't getting information from the WSO and the Area.

- ▲ Is your group getting mail from WSO?
- ▲ Do you have a current mailing address (CMA) listed at the Area and WSO?
- ▲ Does your group have a *Service Manual*?

If not, or if you don't know, send a note or leave a message for Gil at the office (see right). Please include a phone number, the name of a person to contact, and a mailing address so we can get back to you.

Sponsorship

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Sponsorship is a many-faceted and rich tool for enhancing my recovery. It is a vital part of how Al-anon works. I feel that being an Al-Anon sponsor/sponsee has made me grow in leaps & bounds.

For me it serves as a training ground where I can safely experience healthy relationship components like unconditional love, selfless giving, trust, intimacy, confrontation and learn how to voice my discomforts.

In sponsorship relationships, I walk through the fears of abandonment and judgment that I inherited from this disease and come out the other side more whole. I then become more courageous when it comes to practicing these skills outside of Al-anon.

Sponsorship relationships have also helped me work on boundaries—both having them and respecting them. I have had to ask myself what I really need from a sponsor. Can I commit to the honesty needed to build this relationship? What do I expect from a sponsee? Do I have the strength and time to follow through on being there for this person?

In sponsorship, I have walked through my unhealthy feeling of needing to be someone else's higher power and come out trusting that they have one of their own. All I need to know about theirs is that I AM NOT IT.

I do not have anyone's answers...I often don't even have my own, but I can listen with love and gentleness. I can validate that they are okay & lovable just where they are. I can share from my heart and trust that if it is not the right thing for them to hear, they will surely hear it elsewhere or get an answer in their higher power's mysterious way.

One of the best bonuses: I often hear myself, sponsor, or sponsee saying exactly what I most need to hear, so sponsor relationships are a very mutually giving experience for me and I am so grateful to Al-Anon for this fantastic tool.

~ Sharon F.



Alateen Sponsorship—Alateens helped me with many issues of my past. Since I did not go through it then, I would go through it again—this time with them, and a lot of love, compassion, and understanding.

~ Dan F.



Someone who LISTENS, who makes me feel I matter, who is available and reminds me of Al-Anon tools I could apply. She became my sounding board. I've learned I need to communicate my feelings and there is help and hope.

~ Anonymous



I have learned so much through sponsorship. Most of my experiences with sponsorship have been wonderful. Some have been painful. I have fired a sponsor and been fired by sponsees. In both cases, I learned something important about myself. I have learned to love without strings, to love even when I can no longer maintain the sponsor/sponsee relationship. I have learned deep lessons about friendship and letting go of control. I am grateful for the role sponsorship has played in my recovery.

~ Anonymous

Open Letter of Thanks

Thank you:

To the Workshop Committee.

To those of you who ran sub-committees, Chrissy M, Deb E, Glenna W, Gil S, Jackie G, Jean L, Missy B, and Steve C—you and your sub-committees' help were invaluable.

To the speakers, Jim C-AA, Margie J-Al-Anon, and Katie-Alateen, thank you for your experience, strength, and hope.

To Marcia D, the banner was beautiful, a work of art. You are a gift to us.

To the groups who donated the baskets and books, your generosity is outstanding. The baskets were gorgeous!!!!!!!

To those individuals who wish to remain anonymous for the donation of books, money, and the beautiful hand-made quilt: Thank you.

Thank you workshop chairs, Dan F, David G, Cynthia E, Denise C, Jackie G, Judy S, Lisa S, Missy B, and Steve C.

Alateens...Thank you for all your help and participation, you are miracles. Thank you for you!

Thank you AA—your participation is always a blessing.

To those officers, past officers, coordinators, DRs, and GRs who were able to attend, thank you for your service to the fellowship and your continuing contribution to "Carry the Message."

To all those who attended, many thanks. Without you, we would not have a workshop.

With Love and Peace in the program and always,

~ Marie G

Meeting Has Moved

The Friday night Woonsocket Al-Anon Group now meets at 7:30 at Landmark Hospital, 115 Cass Ave., Christenson Meeting Room. (This meeting used to meet at 8:00 at St. James Church.)

Meeting Has Closed

The Monday morning *There Is Hope* group at St. John & Paul Church in Coventry has closed.

Upcoming Events

November

Area Assembly

Sat, November 17, 9:00 AM–2:00 PM

St. Joseph's Hospital, 21 Peace Street, Providence

We will talk about topics that directly affect your groups and then enjoy great food and fellowship. All AWSC members and GRs are expected to give reports on what's happening in their groups/areas of service. Your voice is important. Make sure your group is represented!

December

Lifelines Is Taking a Break in December

Wishing you a holiday season filled with joy, peace, and serenity!

January

Alateen Informational Sponsors Meeting

Sat, Jan 8th, 1:00 PM

Area Office, 106 Rolfe Street, Cranston

Attend the first in a series of quarterly informational Sponsors Meetings.

All Al-Anon members who are currently involved with Alateen or are interested in volunteering are welcome!

RI Al-Anon Family Groups Area Office/Literature Distribution Center (LDC)

106 Rolfe Street, Cranston, RI 02910

Hours: Please call the office

Phone/Fax: 401-781-0044

E-mail: RI_Al-Anon@hotmail.com

Web: www.RIAFG.org

An area newsletter is a vital link in keeping groups and members informed. The purposes of *Lifelines* are to: encourage attendance at service events; communicate local, area, and Al-Anon Information Service news; and attract Al-Anon members into service.

Lifelines submissions may be sent to destre99@yahoo.com or mailed to the office at the address above. The deadline for the next issue is **January 10**.

If you wish to receive *Lifelines* and other Area news via e-mail, please e-mail destre99@yahoo.com and type "Mailing List" in the Subject line.

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